

PLATO ON ART AS IMITATION: A PHILOSOPHICAL CRITIQUE

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Abstract

In Book X of the Republic, Plato argues that art of any kind and epic poetry in particular is an imitation (mimesis), and the creator of this imitation, or the artist (Demiurges), is an imitator. As mimesis art is at two steps removed from True reality and therefore necessarily untrue and cannot but have a bad moral effect on the public. According to him, since art imitates physical things, which in turn imitate the Forms, art is always a copy of a copy, and leads us even further from truth and toward illusion. For this reason, as well as because of its power to stir the emotions, art is dangerous. Judging from his ontological and epistemological views of reality and its connotation to art, the fundamental question at this juncture is: why does Plato accord mimesis disparaging and negative role even when he does not condemn art totally? This essay seeks a possible justification of Plato's theory of art as imitation. In sum, while the paper agrees with Plato on imitative or representational nature of art, it rejects Plato's pessimistic and reproachful attitude towards arts. Ultimately, the paper maintains that vital role of arts in the society cannot be overemphasized.

Keywords: Plato, Art, Imitation, mimesis, theory of Art.

Introduction

The concept of imitation or *mimesis* lies at the core of the entire history of Western attempts to make sense of representational art and its values. This concept has come to acquire one of the traditional means of identifying a form of art or what is generally conceived in aesthetics and art criticism as theory of art. However, despite being made popular by Plato's and Aristotle's attempt to make meaning out of art, the term exists since antiquity which was not equally limited to philosophy and the visual arts.

Linguistically, the root word for imitation is '*mimos*'; *mimesthia*, *mimesis*, *mimetes*, *mimetikos*, and *mimema* are derived from '*mimos*'. *Mimesthia* denotes imitation, representation or portrayal; *mimos* and *mimetes* designate the person who imitates or represents, whereby '*mimos*' originally refers to the recitation or dramatic performance in the context of dramatic action. The *mime*, which is a kind of banquets given by wealthy man, is most probably derived from *mimos*. The noun '*mimesis*' as well as corresponding verb *mimeisthai* refer to the re-enactment and dance through ritual and myth. In Athenian drama the re-enactment is equivalent to acting out the role of a mythical figure and '*mimesis*' in such a context that connotes the imitation of the earlier re-enactment of the myth and rituals (Baktir 168).

Historically, the word '*mimesis*' as re-enactment first appears in such rituals, and the historical origin of the term, as located in Dionysian cult drama, coincides this meaning in that '*mimesis*' in both cases refers to imitation, representation and expression. It is argued that myth, and divine symbols of the rituals are transformed to artistic-dramatic representation through which it became possible to represent the divinity and gods in drama. Tragedy, for instance is the transformation of the myth and rituals (Baktir 168, Golden 119).

In a different context '*mimesis*', according to Baktirmay, refers to identification. People identify themselves by means of their mimetic ability when they see themselves in the other and perceive a state of mutual equality (Baktir 168). In this sense, '*mimesis*' is distinct from mimicry, which implies only a physical, and no mental relation. That is, a person regards the 'Other' as equal and assumes the 'Other' to be doing the same in reverse. Associated with the physical aspect of '*mimesis*' is its performative aspect, as an actualization, a presentation of what has been mimetically indicated and hence the term '*mimesis*' implies an action-oriented speaking.

The term '*mimesis*' may also refer to simile, similarity and representation; it may refer to the symbolization of the world when we take it as a transformation of myth. *Mimesis* has also been cited since classical times in the exploration of relationships between art and reality. The meanings and applications of the term changes according to the context it is used. According to Princeton, the meaning changed so much that Socrates had some reservations about calling the art of painting as art and used words close to it such as '*ek-nemesis*' and '*apomimesis*' to represent it (Princeton 2002).

Plato and Aristotle are generally credited to have bequeathed to the tradition of literary criticism the concept of imitation or *mimesis* well into the eighteenth century (Wei & Wangmei 31). The fact that Plato and Aristotle accepted this theory was equally important for centuries to come in history of the leading and principal theories of arts. However, each of them assigned a different meaning to the theory of *mimesis* and, therefore, variants of it or rather two theories originated under the same name. Thus, Hassan Baktir summarizes Plato's use of the word imitation as follows: "Plato takes the term '*mimesis*' with several meanings and connotations in the dialogues and alters the meaning of the term according to the context in which he uses it." (Baktir 169).

In his early writings, Plato was rather vague in his use of the term 'imitation'. Sometimes he applied it to music and dance and sometimes he confined it to painting and sculpture. At first, he called only poetry or tragedy 'imitative'. Finally, he accepted Socrates' broad concept, which embraced almost the entire art of painting, sculpture, and poetry. Later, his conception of art as imitating reality grew extreme and he presented it as a passive and faithful act of copying the outer world. Aristotle summarizes the thesis that art imitates reality but imitation is not supposed to take recourse to mere faithful copying but speaks of an approach to reality and the artist who imitates and presents reality in his own way. In fact, the idea of imitation, therefore, was as applicable to music as to sculpture and theatre. To Aristotle "imitation" was initially imitation of human actions but it gradually meant the imitation of nature and regarded as the source of its perfection (Senol 2867).

Art as Imitation in Plato's Aesthetics

It has been argued that Plato has no theory or philosophy of art. This belief according to Gonzalez stems from his antagonism to poets in general and dramatic poetry in particular (Gonzalez 161). However, in his "Plato's Philosophy of Art", R. G. Collingwood went all out to defend the thesis that Plato could be arguably described as one of the great pioneers of aesthetic theories. According to Collingwood, Plato's theory of art can be summarized in three main points: the doctrine of the Three Degrees of Reality, the doctrine of the Three Degrees of Knowledge, the doctrine of the Emotionality of Art (Collingwood 158-160). Collingwood's position on Plato's philosophy of art arises from the analysis he makes of the Tenth Book of the *Republic*. According to him, Plato developed both a positive and negative theory of art. The negative side of the concept of *mimesis* in Plato is the affirmation of the impossibility of the copy to reproduce the model in an adequate form; its positive side is that it is, at least, a copy,

an imitation. This way, a work of art, although an object of a different degree of reality from the percept, nevertheless copies that perceptual world, maintaining a positive relation with it. Plato's theory of art as imitation is here, therefore, to be considered under the three categories Collingwood makes of it above, and from the summary Gonzalez makes of Collingwood reading of Plato. According to Gonzalez, Plato's philosophy of art can be summarized in the following points:

1. Plato sets the basis for a sound theory of art distinguishing art from other types of experience. The central concept in this distinction is [mimesis]. A work of art is neither a percept nor an idea, but an imitation of the percept, and therefore an imitation of the imitation of the idea, a second order copy of true reality. 2. Plato also develops a positive theory of art by defining a proper experience for the work of art. This experience is imagination and its proper quality is beauty conceived as the emotional dimension of the work of art. 3. The emotional character of the work of art, its glamour, can only be explained defining art as an indirect symbol of truth. This explains Plato's bipolar position about the arts in the description of the ideal state (169).

As have been established above, the lowest common denominator of Plato's philosophy of art is that all art is essentially imitation; whether imitation of a good sort or imitation of a bad sort. This assertion is line with both Collingwood analysis of Plato's positive and negative philosophy of art and Prof. J. Tate who argues forcefully that Plato uses imitation in two senses. The imitation he banishes at 595a-5 in his *Republic* is imitation of a bad sort while the imitation he admits at 397a4-5 in his *Republic* is the imitation of a good sort (Tate 18). Thus, the aim here is to eliminate any contradictions and settle the course that Plato did not contradict himself as many commentators may claim in his critique of art as imitation.

Plato's theory of art is derived from his ontological/metaphysical and epistemological/ethical view of reality. In Plato's philosophical system, the world is divided into two domains: the phenomenon and the noumenon, or the world of sense-perceptions and the world of Ideals. The former is an ephemerally ever-changing one where "the becoming" is happening at every moment; while the latter is eternal and changeless, one that the Truth or the Being is its essence. In *The Republic* through Socrates' mouth, Plato locates Reality in what are called Ideals or Forms rather than in the world of appearances or phenomena perceived through senses, the latter being mere copies or derivatives of the former, thus the unreliability of perceptions gained through senses. He continues by arguing that the true knowledge can only be attained by the rational power exercised in dialectical search which would finally lead to the Truth. In Book X of the *Republic* he illustrates his insistence of banishing the poets from his Republic through the example of three "beds" (Omogunwa 3): The Ideal of "bed"; the bed made by a carpenter and the "bed" by a painter. The bed by a carpenter is a particular derivative from the universal and abstract Ideal of "bed", but the "bed" by a painter is more inferior in that it is copied merely by "turning a mirror round and round" (Plato, 2006, p.30) and therefore an imitation of appearance, or an imitation of imitation, thus "thrice removed from the king and from the truth." (Plato, 2006, p.31) Then Plato makes an analogy to the poets:

And now we may fairly take him and place him by the side of the painter, for he is like him in two ways: first, inasmuch as his creations have an inferior degree of truth—in this, I say, he is like him; and he is

also like him in being concerned with an inferior part of the soul... (Plato, 2006, p.35)

In the third book of the Republic, for instance, Plato provides further definitions of 'mimesis', focusing on the relation between 'mimesis' and poetry, 'mimesis' and education and also poetry and education. 'Since young people learn essentially through imitation, it is significant to select the models' (Richter 18-19). 'Mimesis suggests unfavorable effect on the part of the young people' and 'poetry is one important source of the youth's experience with examples and models'; therefore, if the world of models and examples ought to be controlled in the interest of education, poetry must likewise be subject to control (Mckeon 121 -123). Plato then argues the case in the Republic as follow: "The youth cannot distinguish what is allegorical from what is not, and the beliefs they acquire at the age are hard to expunge and usually remain unchanged. That is important that the first stories they hear should be well told and dispose them to virtue". (Republic, Book X).

For Plato, young people should only imitate brave, sober, pious and noble men, which will increase their strength and will not infect them with weakness. In this sense, it is argued in the Republic that tragedy and comedy, as mimetic poetry, represent injustice among the gods in the assertion that gods are responsible for unhappiness among people. In the Platonic conception, gods cannot be evil; heroes cannot be weak. The poet's representation violates the truth and by representing the deficiencies of gods and heroes, has negative effect on the community and the education of youth. Mimetic poetry not only misrepresents gods and heroes and leads young people to immoral behaviors but also appeals to, and strengthens the lower, desiring part of the soul. Plato's contention against poetry is that it encourages short-term indulgence in our emotions when reason would forbid their gratification because it is useless or harmful for the citizen who considers life as a whole. 'Reason is a capacity that enables moral quality and authorities. Poetry is intuitive and stirs up a part of a citizen that ought to be kept quiet and fosters the lower part of the soul against the rule of higher part, reason' (Baktir 169). Poetry becomes a dangerous rival to morality, which 'is able to corrupt even good man and is a very dangerous thing encouraging all the lower desires and making them hard to cope with suffering in the theatre, and taking pleasure in laughing at comedies tends to affect our attitudes in real life and make us cynical and unserious. Sex, anger, and all desires, pleasure and pains are fostered by poetic imitation, thus, Homer and tragic poets are not true example for a citizen' (Annas 279).

Poetry, then, taking its theme as human emotion and human frailty, threatens to disturb the balance and rational disposition of the individual for the individual, by way of his mimetic abilities, is infected through poetry. Philosophy provides wisdom and truth in the education but poetry has a potential capacity to demoralize mind. For example, Homer's poetry was drawn on for educational purposes as a collection of knowledge and wisdom and enter in to competition with philosophy, it should therefore, be censored (Annas 279). It is obvious that poetry endangers the ideal citizens who can control and manage their feelings and remain reasonable, thus should be censored. The Plato's theory of the human soul as being constructed in three levels accounts for another reason for the exile of the poets derived from Plato's Ideals. Human soul is according to him divided into three parts: the rational, the spirited, and the emotional or the impulses, the first being the highest part and the third being the lowest. He explains that the imitative poet "is not by nature made, nor is his art intended to please or to affect the rational principle in the soul; but he will prefer the passionate and fitful temper, which is easily imitated." (Plato 35) Hence Plato's banishing the poets from his Republic is justified in an ethical sense because the poetry appeals to the lowest part of human

soul and has the power of “harming even the good”: “...therefore we shall be right in refusing to admit him (the poet) into a well-ordered State, because he awakens and nourishes and strengthens the feelings and impairs the reason”. (Plato 35).

The second meaning of Platonic concept of imitation is the technical one. Plato has Socrates speak of Book III of the three modes of telling a story: “...what you failed to apprehend before is now made clear to you, that poetry and mythology are, in some cases, wholly imitative—instances of this are supplied by tragedy and comedy...” (Plato 25). The “wholly imitative” form, where the poet has his personae speak (thus imitates his personae), as in the drama, is the most deceptive of the three because the author never speaks in his own voice, thus creating an effect of authorial detachment and a space for the autonomy of the characters. Such a literary technique, though not in a strict sense as in details discussed by Plato, has exerted a great influence on the Western literary history. Later writers such as Robert Browning, with his dramatic monologue in our mind, and T. S. Eliot, with his theory of “depersonalization” and “objective correlative”, who claims that “poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape of personality” (Eliot 807) can all trace their inheritance to Plato’s theory of mimesis as a literary technique.

Critical Evaluation

Plato is considered the first philosopher to inquire into the nature of imaginative arts and to put forward theories which are both illuminating and provocative. As a poet himself, his dialogues are full of poetic beauty and dramatic qualities. As have been observed in the exposition above, Plato’s critique of art as imitation is based on his claims that art should serve both pedagogical and ethical purposes. To this effect, Karduan maintains that what Platonism is directed at - something which is especially manifest in the *Republic* -, is establishing a kind of intellectual fascism, both politically (in the state) and psychologically (in the psyche of the individual). According to him, Plato insists that “logos should reign at all costs, and emotions should be repressed whenever they are likely to come into conflict with reason” (Karduan 157).

Thus, ‘real’ art should reveal a kind of higher truth. Being a moralist, he disapproves of poetry because it is immoral. As a philosopher he disapproves of it because it is based in falsehood. To him, philosophy is better than poetry because the philosopher deals with idea/truth, whereas the poet deals with what appears to him as illusion. He believed that truth of philosophy was more important than the pleasure of poetry. He insists that artistic values should be guided by the criteria of truthfulness, ethical quality of contents and psychological benefits.

Numerous objections have equally been levelled against the Platonic theory of art as imitation. The fiercest and severest critic of Plato’s theory of art is his pupil, Aristotle. Contrary to the Platonic assumption that the world of phenomena is one that cannot lead to the Truth but only to sense-perceptions, Aristotle views the world as an ever-changing process in which the Reality is located and manifested by the inward principle of order of either a natural or an artificial product. He denies the existence of Platonic Ideals apart from the particular things and believes that the changing process itself is a fundamental reality; any natural process, as raining, or artificial process, as the making of a house, is pregnant with the Truth and itself a manifestation of Reality. Consequently the process of imitation is not one that involves the slavish copy of appearances or images, but one that involves the inward principle of order and hence the Truth. He gives an example of making a house in his *Physics*:

...Thus if a house, e.g., had been a thing made by nature, it would have been made in the same way as it is now by art; and if things made by nature were made also by art, they would come to be in the same way as by nature.... (Aristotle 50)

In this example, a natural process is perfectly identified with an artificial process. So an analogy can be made to a poet's imitation. A poetic imitation is first of all a process which involves the inward principle of order of the work itself. The poet "takes a form from nature and reshapes it in a different medium." (Karduan 146) This can be best exemplified by what Aristotle calls "the soul of tragedy"—the action or plot: "... Tragedy is essentially an imitation not of persons but of actions and life, of happiness and misery. All human happiness or misery takes the form of action...." (Aristotle 55) The action is a natural process itself; by imitating the action, the tragedian takes a form from nature and reshapes it in a different medium, that is, primarily language and words. Poetry, along with other artistic forms such as painting or music, is thus an improvement on nature in that "the poet has brought to completion what nature, operating with its own principles, is still developing." (Kardaun 148) From such a sense poetic imitation is not only justified as a process in which the Truth locates, as against Plato's position that poetic imitation is "thrice removed from the king and from the truth", but also further elevated as a way to make improvement on what nature is still developing.

Apart from the view that imitation is itself a natural process where Reality locates, Aristotle furthers his point in *Poetics* that poetic imitation is superior to history in reflecting truth by proposing his principle of probable or necessary:

..The one (history) describes the thing that has been, and the other (poetry) a kind of thing that might be. Hence poetry is something more philosophic and of graver import than history, since its statements are of the nature rather of universals, whereas those of history are singulars. By a universal statement I mean one as to what such or such a kind of man will probably or necessarily say or do — which is the aim of poetry..... And for this reason: What convinces is the possible.... (Aristotle 57)

He argues in his preference of poetry that what has happened (history) only deals with the particulars and the accidental, whereas what will probably or necessarily happen (poetry) relates to those which are of a universal nature. So through poetic imitation, the poet handles those events which comply with the principle of probable or necessary and therefore advances in truth, a notion referring to what things should be rather than what things are or have been. So imitation is justified also as a process of creation, the poet also the creator (Givens 127). Aristotle also holds in his *Poetics* concerning imitation that it is not only a part of human nature, but also brings delight to man. (Aristotle 53).

It is a general human experience that, for example, though the dead body is painful for the human eyes, it is a great delight to see them most vividly and authentically represented in paintings. So is the poetic imitation. Aristotle not only justifies the delight brought by tragedy, but also advances to make efforts to lay rules for this form of imitation: he, like a well-trained physician, devotes several chapters discussing what kind of plot is best for a tragedy, and, how the imitation can achieve a moralizing effect, namely, by "arousing pity and fear accomplish its catharsis of such emotions". (Aristotle 55) Through such efforts he remotely opposes Plato's dismissal of poetic imitation as a way to corrupt the mind of his citizens through its appeals to the lowest part of human soul. In addition, Aristotle rejects Plato's claim that arts are lies because they do not teach "... morality and virtues. Aristotle sees that the function of art is not

aesthetic; it is not created to teach morality teaches. Art does not attempt to teach. It merely asserts it is thus or thus that life is perceived to be. That is my bit of reality, says the artist". (Scott-James42).

It seems pertinent here to note that, in spite of their different philosophical premises, Plato and Aristotle agree on ranking philosophers at the top, but Aristotle located the poets in a higher position not after the craftsman as Plato did.

In his essay entitled "The Carpenter as a Philosopher-Artist: a Critique of Plato's Theory Mimesis", Omogunwa argues that the grounds provided for Plato's rejection of imitative art are not sufficient when they are critically subjected to his own analogy. Drawing from Plato analogy of the 'bed', 'chair' and 'table' and the carpenter and painter who makes and paints them, Plato according to Omogunwa maintains that a carpenter's chair is the result of the idea of chair in his mind, the created chair is once removed from reality and since a painter's chair is imitation of a carpenter's chair, it is twice removed from reality. Thus, Omogunwa argues that if ideas are true existence, then we cannot refute the notion that the carpenter as a maker of a chair knows something of true existence, since he makes the bed, chair and table from ideas and thus could be accorded the same intellectual insight with the philosopher. Omogunwa portrays this thus: "...if those capable of grasping ideas from the world of forms are philosophers, and evidently, the carpenter is able to grasp ideas, we can safely conclude that the carpenter is a philosopher". (3).

Based on Plato's classification of soul, and eventually his classification of a state, a carpenter/ craftsman is classified as a non-philosopher belonging to the category of appetitive/ workers. This raises the question of how a carpenter is able to grasp the realities if he is not suited for it. The implication of this is that Plato's classification of the state is unnecessary and at the same time unjust. Omogunwa continues when he argues that judging by the analogy of Plato on imitation and considering our establishment of the carpenter as an imitator of ideas or realities, which in turn makes him a philosopher, then the task of a philosopher in grasping an idea is a kind of game not to be taken seriously. Of course, this becomes an inherent contradiction in Plato's analogy (5).

Kardaun argues that Plato's theory of art does not allow for free artistic expressions. Platonism is repressive to such a degree that it cannot afford to allow for any alternative views of life. According to him, Plato's ambition to eliminate any compensatory influences goes astonishingly far: not only does Plato recommend that artistic expression be strictly controlled; he even wants to regulate the dream life of the citizens in his ideal state. Plato believes that by concentrating on worthy and beautiful thoughts before going to sleep one is able to avoid "dream visions that are unlawful". (158)A. C. Bradley maintains that art is essentially a creative activity. Hence self-expression not imitation, is at the center of artistic endeavor. Prof. A. C. Bradley, in a series of lectures at Oxford, developed this position at some length. He states:

Poetry may have also an ulterior value as a means to culture or religion because it conveys instruction or softens passions ... But its ulterior worth neither is nor can directly determine its poetic worth as a satisfying imaginative experience) and this is to be judged entirely from within ... For its nature is to be not a part, nor yet a copy, of the real world, but to be a world by itself', independent, complete, autonomous and to possess it fully you must conform to its laws, and ignore for the time the beliefs, aims and. particular conditions which belong to you in the other world of reality. (Bradley 4-5)

Professor Bradley concedes that "there is plenty of connection between life and poetry," but it is an "underground connection." The real world is in no way a measure of poetic value, for the only test of artistic worth "lies simply in the question whether it satisfies our imagination" (Bradley 7).

In his book, *Art and Reality*, F.O. Nolte takes exception to what he calls "Plato's naive understanding of art's purpose". Nolte maintains that if the artist's work is a copy of a copy two steps removed from reality, it is based on the false supposition that the purpose of a work of art is the same as that of its visible model. In other words, the painting of a bed should serve the same purpose as a bed. According to him, "Only under this assumption could it pertinently be called a reproduction or a copy." For as he remarks later, "It is not permissible to condemn a painting as an inferior substitute for a bed, for it was never intended to serve as such (Nolte 28).

Other critics of art, on the other hand, have objected to the Platonic theory on the grounds that it is too coldly intellectual. Plato, they say, confused beauty and truth and as a result neglected the emotional aspects of artistic appreciation. Plato distrusted the emotions because he looked upon them as an unruly force in man constantly warring against sovereign reason. A man's virtue and character depended largely on his ability to dominate his emotions in a rational manner, and this was not easily done. Since art pandered the emotions by calling them into play, Plato was quite distrustful of the arts. Because of this same distrust of the emotions Plato was unwilling to grant that art's principal aim is to give pleasure, since pleasure implies arousing the feelings and emotions. Speaking of music Plato remarks: "When anyone says that music is to be judged by pleasure, his doctrine cannot be admitted ... Those who seek for the best kind of song and music ought not seek what is pleasant, but for that which is truth". (Law 668 a-b). As Verdenius has remarked: "It must be admitted that Plato did too little justice to the specific function of aesthetical feeling and emotion." (28).

Carleton Brownson in his essay entitled "Reasons for Plato's Hostility to the Poets" concluded that Plato's metaphysical argument against the poets given in the tenth book of the Republic is mere naive sophistry and that Plato probably did not want us to take it seriously. According to him "In Book X we cannot help feeling that Plato in following whether the argument leads has forgotten to be broad-minded. Did Plato regard his own work this way? It seems to be altogether probable" (Brownson 12).

Conclusion

Plato's *Theory of Imitation or Mimesis* is described by Hassan Al Kiri as "the first literary theory in the written history of humanity". His perspective of the role of arts was idealistic. He believed that arts should improve morals and ideals and, therefore, he condemned poetry (the core of the Greek educational system) describing its stories about Greek gods and heroes as lies that can destroy the society. Plato argues that if gods and heroes, who are supposed to be representatives and symbols of righteousness, commit such heinous deeds, young men will, in turn, commit the same acts following, for instance, the example of those model heroes as Homer and Aeschylus. Thus, he attacks poetry because it corrupts minds of its hearers, especially young men, causing harm to the society. Secondly, Plato's attack on *mimetic* poetry is based on the fact that poetry appeals to the appetitive and emotion part of man's soul. Plato explains that the imitative poet "is not by nature made, nor is his art intended, to please or to affect the rational principle in the soul; but he will prefer the passionate and fitful temper, which is easily imitated." Hence Plato's banishing of the poets from his Republic is justified in an ethical sense because poetry appeals to the lowest part of human soul and has the power of "harming even the good". Thirdly, Plato argues that imitative form of poetry where the poet

has his personae speak (thus imitates his personae), as in the drama, is deceptive because the author never speaks in his own voice.

As a contribution to the merits of imitative arts, Aristotle believes that Man is a mimetic being and that he creates art to reflect his reality. He locates Reality in the process of imitation, thus making justice to poetry as a legitimate art form; then he suggests it is part of human nature to imitate and delight in the works of imitation, and thereby alleviating Plato's doubt about the positive function of poetry. Aristotle proposes catharsis of emotions brought by tragedy, hence defending poetic imitation from an ethical (or practical) point of view, hinting that poetry has a social effect of emotional purgation. In sum, while Plato's disparaging conception of art represent some valid possibility of art effect in the society, the benefits of art in the society too cannot be overemphasized and this is evident in Aristotle's response to Plato.

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